

**Washington, DC** - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today called on the United States Postal Service (USPS) to enter into an agreement with a willing landholder and take necessary steps to ensure funding is in place to begin site development for a new post office in Willow, New York.

The current postal facility, which has been housed in a trailer on a rental property for nearly 10 years, must be removed to accommodate the needs of the private property owner. The current location also fails to comply with USPS workplace and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Hinchey highlighted the lack of home delivery that has resulted from a USPS determination that roads were unsafe for USPS vehicles and noted the negative economic impact that would result were the post office to close.

"Willow is home to a large number of home-based businesses, including artists and crafters, who rely on the post office to mail their products across the country, said Hinchey in a letter to Postmaster General John E. Potter. "Obviously, the two factors are related; as there is no possibility of home delivery, the option of the USPS picking up business packages at homes is almost non-existent."

The full text of the letter from Hinchey to Potter is below.

August 10, 2010

John E. Potter, Postmaster General  
476 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Room 10802  
Washington, DC 20260  
FAX: (202) 268-4977

Dear Mr. Potter:

I am writing to call to your attention a burgeoning situation in the rural community of Willow,

New York, which I proudly represent in Congress. At the present time, I am working with a committed group of constituents to help ensure the continued operation of the Willow Post Office. Regrettably, there is significant concern among Willow residents that the USPS intends to close this small facility.

To begin, the current location of the Willow facility can best be described as being the center of the hamlet of Willow, a small but geographically diverse community. The current postal facility is now housed in a trailer on a rental property. In fact, while this was initially deemed to be a temporary placement, it has been situated on this parcel for nearly 10 years. Some time ago, the property owner informed the USPS that she wanted to regain the use of the property and return it to agricultural production. As a result, the trailer housing the Post Office must be moved. The problem at hand revolves around where the facility can and should be relocated.

My office has been diligently working with USPS regional representatives and town officials to find a suitable solution to this conundrum. To that end, in July, regional USPS representatives, along with the town supervisor, my district representative and my staff postal liaison visited Willow in search of an appropriate place to relocate the post office. Regrettably, there are no existing buildings available that can house the Post Office. The group also visited the suggested, undeveloped, alternative properties to which the trailer could potentially be moved. It appears that the regional staff is quite concerned, however, about the costs associated with trailer relocation for several reasons.

At this juncture, I think it prudent that you be made aware that the Willow facility is not currently in compliance with current USPS workplace standards, having no potable water or permanent lavatory facilities. Additionally, the facility fails to meet today's ADA criteria. I believe we would all agree that it is essential that these basic amenities be part of any relocation effort. This, of course, would involve the USPS bearing the costs of relocation and site development. Among those things needed would be the drilling of a well to ensure a stable water source, installing a septic system to handle a regular lavatory facility, creating a paved parking lot, and constructing an entrance to the facility that is in compliance with ADA accessibility regulations. It is of interest to note that there is a suitable property which could be developed and, further, that the owner had been in contract negotiations with USPS a few years ago but nothing came of those talks. This alternative site is located in close proximity to the existing site, and as such, would keep the facility in the geographical center of town.

Maintaining the post office is critically important to the Willow community for both logistical and economic reasons. Between 75 and 80 percent of the approximately 140 box holders utilizing the site are unable to receive mail at their homes because the USPS has deemed the roads on

which they live unsafe for USPS vehicles. In addition, Willow is home to a large number of home-based businesses, including artists and crafters, who rely on the post office to mail their products across the country. Obviously, the two factors are related; as there is no possibility of home delivery, the option of the USPS picking up business packages at homes is almost non-existent. Finally, it is worth noting that the revenue generated by mailings resulting from these home-based businesses significantly exceeded the projections that the USPS had estimated for this past year.

It is essential for the USPS to review the available options and take immediate, proactive action. As has been discussed, the owner of the property on which the postal trailer now sits asked that it be moved more than a year ago. There is no lease and, to say the least, she has been gracious in affording the USPS time to search for an alternative site. However, I will also say her patience is wearing thin and, should she exercise her property rights, the USPS will be faced with the very real possibility of suspending service in Willow. This action would result in severe economic and personal hardship for my constituents and it is something I urge you to prevent from happening.

In order to avoid this injurious outcome, I believe it is imperative that the USPS take immediate action to enter into an agreement with a willing land holder and then take the necessary steps to ensure that funding is in place to begin site development. This post office is vital to the well being of the residents and businesses of Willow and it should not be allowed to close.

In closing, I ask that I be kept informed of your intentions in addressing this situation. Please know that my office remains available to assist in any appropriate manner. I wish to thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey

